

MAY 28 1972

Community Affairs File

Vigo County Public Library

Dr. E. J. Hunt's Park Nature Center Open for Tours Every Week Day

By BARBARA L. BRUGNAUX
Tribune Staff Writer

"Thank you for the wonderful tour of Dr. Hunt's nature center. I learned a lot about the trees, plants and insects. I liked the old school house, I liked the hornet's nest and the snake skin; it was all very lovely."

Whether or not the little girl who wrote the above paragraph really thought the hornet's nest and snake skin were "very lovely," her note is typical of letters Keith Ruble, naturalist with the Vigo County Park and Recreation Department, receives every day.

Leased and maintained by the county park department, Dr. Edgar J. Hunt's nature center is open for tours every weekday. By the end of this school year, over 1,800 Vigo County youngsters will have taken those tours and carefully penned letters like the following:

"Thank you for all the nice things you showed us. I liked the trees, grasses, flowers and bugs."

"I liked the jack-in-the-pulpit a lot. But I liked you best of all. The law about the rail fence was funny . . ."

"My favorite tree is the May Apple. I think they look like umbrellas. I didn't know they turned into apples."

Although many of the letters are funny, all are touching and demonstrate a quick appreciation of nature's quietly spectacular show.

"I didn't know that if you would pick up a leaf or a broken branch that you would be destroying nature," was a typical student comment.

"I tell them that by picking up sticks or branches, or if their fathers clear out a woods, they are destroying the homes and food supply of many animals and bugs," Ruble explained.

A walk through nature preserves refreshes the mind and the eye, reminding a city-dweller that an entirely different world exists within a few minutes' drive.

Located on county road 123, about five miles south of Prairieton, the 50-acre nature reserve is composed of Dr. Hunt's property and the Lloyd Deutch Woods.

While part of the land was farmed as late as 1950, other parts were last tilled in 1907 and provide, according to Ruble, "excellent examples of successional growth, flood-plain and upland forests."

Ruble varies his tour with the age of the group.

"The older they get, the more technical terms I can use, but you'd be surprised how quickly the young ones catch on," he commented. "Many times the students' notice things I never saw."

Ruble feels strongly that such areas should be preserved before urbanization swallows them.

"I agree with those authorities who say that if we don't save areas now, we won't have them in the future. We have to preserve now so that in another

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100 years we can show those children what Terre Haute looked like when the pioneers came."

Ruble, who has a master's degree in recreation from Indiana State University, says he learned most of his naturalist lore while a child in southern Indiana.

He considers the Hunt nature center a living museum because it contains many scarce and endangered species of plant life, and supports vigorously a recommendation in the park department's new master plan that five or six other nature areas be developed.

"The educational opportunities are limitless," Ruble commented. "The overwhelming response we've had since beginning the tours last October shows that Vigo County has a real need for explanation and appreciation of the outdoors."

Tours will continue throughout the summer and may be arranged by calling the county park department's courthouse office. Ruble encourages both adult and children's groups to visit the area, but adds that thank you notes, while appreciated, are not necessary.

He did, however, nominate the following as one of his favorites:

"Dear Keith, I enjoyed the trip. The screech owl was cute. You were good guide."

VIGO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
ONE LIBRARY SQUARE
TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA 47807

Community Affairs File

over



PEERING AT NATURE—Vigo County Park Department naturalist Keith Ruble helps Cub Scout Doug Cleveland explore the home of a screech owl via binoculars during one of the many tours Ruble conducts at the Hunt Nature Center. Den leader Jean Ash, George Ketner and Dr. Edgar J. Hunt joined the tour.
House of Photography Photos.



A STUDY IN AGE—While this picture might have been taken one hundred years ago, it was actually taken just last week. Dr. Edgar J. Hunt posed near a cabin built in 1866 on property that has been owned by his family since the early 1800's. That property is now part of the Hunt Nature Center, leased and maintained by the Vigo County Park and Recreation Department.

THE EDGAR J. HUNT NATURE CENTERHUNT'S
NATURE CENTER

Hunt's Nature Center offers a vivid experience in the out-of-doors. The delightful wooded area south of Terre Haute was leased and developed by the Vigo County Park and Recreation Department in the fall of 1971.

Guided tours through the area are available on a group basis only and may be scheduled daily (Monday through Friday) from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Tours usually last from 1½ to 2 hours.

The center was named in tribute of Dr. Edgar Hunt, who often assists in conducting the tours. There is an excellent outdoor museum for educators and an aesthetic appreciation of the out-of-doors provided for each visitor.

A tiny log cabin tucked away in the 23-acre tract was built in 1866 and serves as the naturalist headquarters and classroom. The area surrounding the cabin displays itself in a successional sequence of forest and plant flora. Many varieties of plant and tree life can be seen including very scarce and endangered species.

The nature area is only a fifteen minute drive from Terre Haute, south on State Road 63, approximately eleven miles.

For further information and reservation for tours, contact the Vigo County Park and Recreation Department, Room 45, Court House, Terre Haute, Indiana 47807. -OR- Telephone: 232-4074.

Keith Ruble, Superintendent

Parks & Recreation
(Vigo Co)

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Vigo County Public Library

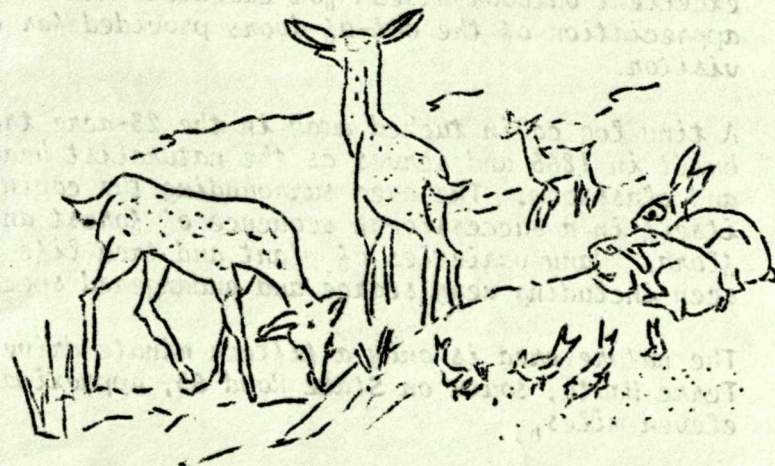
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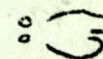
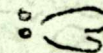
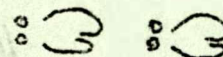
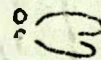
THE VIGO COUNTY PARK AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

TAKE ONLY MEMORIES

LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS . . .



THE VIGO COUNTY
PARK AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
INVITES YOUR GROUP
OR CLASS TO VISIT . . .



Cabin at Nature Study Center Built By Buster Keaton's Grandparents

Recreation, Vigo Co.

DEC 21 1971

By MARY ANNE PIERCE

Tribune Staff Writer

A Nature Study Center developed by the Vigo County Park and Recreation Department to acquaint student groups with Indiana flora and fauna is giving them a bit of Vaudeville history as well.

A tiny log cabin tucked away in the 23-acre tract leased to the park department by Dr. Edgar Hunt was built and occupied by the grandparents of comedian Buster Keaton.

John Keaton, grandfather of the comedian, built the original two-room structure. The original logs have been shortened to make a one-room cabin, a new fire place has been built and the roof repaired. The interior, used by the park department for its lectures, contains a storage chest handmade by John Keaton.

The cabin was built at the close of the Civil War in 1866, according to Dr. Hunt. John was the brother of Dr. Hunt's grandmother, Mary Ann Keaton Hunt.

Although Buster's father, Joe, was born at the family mill southeast of Terre Haute along the Eel River, Dr. Hunt said he grew up in the area. Dr. Hunt recalls seeing Buster, his father, often referred to as Dode, and his mother, Myra, perform on the stage of a local opera house. Dode and Myra, Hunt said, were vaudeville acrobats. Buster was born along the circuit in Kansas City, according to the doctor. He remembers visits with the Keaton family when they were performing in the area. He particularly remembers Buster as a youngster with long blonde curls.

The land surrounding the cabin will be used by the park department for a nature study

program. Keith Ruble, an ISU graduate student majoring in recreation, serves as nature specialist. With the assistance of Dr. Hunt, who taught high school science before completing his medical studies, Ruble helps visitors identify trees, plants and wildlife.

The park department has a five-year lease with Dr. Hunt. Thirty additional acres in the same area have been added in a lease agreement with Lloyd Deutsch.

Dave Beres, director of the department, said Hunt's Nature Center is not an unusual venture. "We are just catching up with other larger park and rec-

reation departments. Cities like around the farm to feed the squirrels and running trap lines. Evansville and Fort Wayne already have them."

Dr. Hunt retired from private practice in 1959. His office was located in the Rose Dispensary Building from 1930 to 1947. Until 1959, he operated a neighborhood practice in the Prairie Creek area.

The 76-year-old physician served two years with the Merchant Marines as a ship's doctor, traveling from New Orleans to the Caribbean and several South American ports. The ship transported aluminum for the Alcoa Company, according to him.

He later served in a similar position aboard a luxury liner traveling from California to Hawaii.

Dr. Hunt follows a daily routine at the nature center that includes a walk around the acreage before breakfast. He enjoys observing the seasonal changes in the over 100 different kinds of trees.

His daily chores include placing 12 ears of corn in spots

Along his walks, he occasionally spots a deer or pheasant and sees numerous quail, rabbits and squirrels.

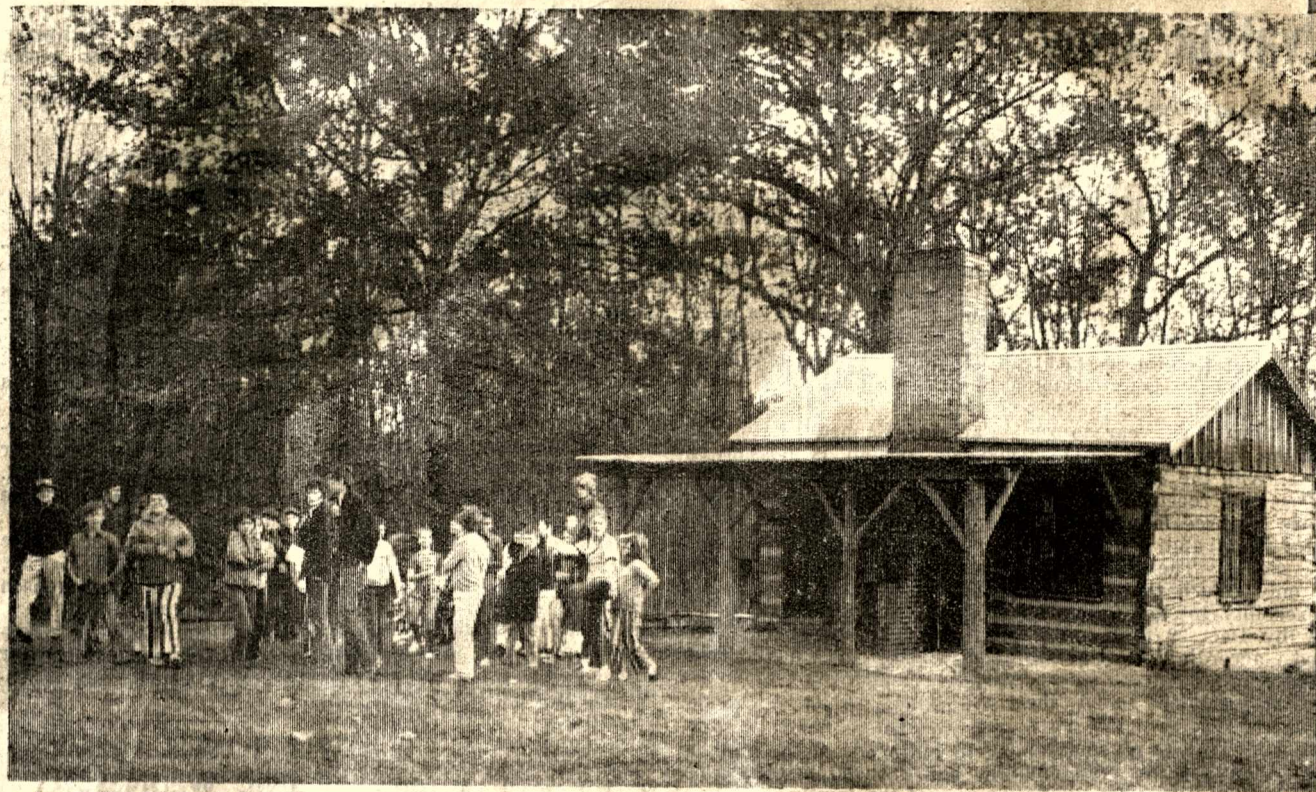
Dr. Hunt is an avid contract bridge player and was named the first life master in Terre Haute in 1958. When the weather permits, he plays regularly at the Terre Haute Bridge Center.

HUNT NATURE CENTER

Community Affairs File

Recreation (Vigo Co.)

INDIANA ROOM



HUNT'S NATURE CENTER is a new project offered student groups by the Vigo County Park and Recreation Department. The log cabin on the 23-acre tract of land southwest of Terre Haute now serves as a lecture room for the nature study tours. It was once the home of the grandparents of comedian Buster Keaton. The property is owned by Dr. Edgar Hunt, a relative of Keaton.

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Martin Photo.

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CONT ON THE BACK

PARK DEPARTMENT AWAITS SPRING AND CENTER TOURS

(Vigo County) Recreation

Photos by Martin.



A SEEDLING grew into a large tree right through a discarded buggy tire rim. Dr. Hunt and some of his young visitors inspect the novelty.

Recreation (Vigo County)

THE
TERRE HAUTE
TRIBUNE-STAR

January 23, 1973.

TERRE HAUTE,
INDIANA

INDIANA ROOM

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YOUNGSTERS gather around the sign marking the entrance to the center named in tribute to Dr. Edgar Hunt, who leased the property to the Vigo County Park and Recreation Department.



THE STATE TREE is one of the many trees identified for the young naturalists. The 23-acre tract of land was leased by the Vigo County Park and Recreation Department to provide student groups a place to observe the different aspects of forestry and wildlife. Keith Ruble, an ISU graduate student, is the chief nature specialist at the center.



STUDENTS collect leaves as they are identified by Ruble. There are at least 100 different kinds of trees at the Hunt Nature Center. A mounted leaf collection is on display in the cabin for their use.



RUBLE points to a thicket as an ideal hiding place for the rabbits, quail, squirrels and the occasional deer and pheasants seen at the Hunt Nature Center. Student groups have been encouraged by park and recreation director, Dave Beres, to make arrangements for tours of the property when the weather permits.



AN AUTHENTIC log cabin on the property serves as a lecture room and nature museum. The cabin was built in 1866 by John Keaton and is now owned by Dr. Edgar Hunt. The retired physician, seen center, assists with the tours.